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variations in colour are not confined within certain tribal limits, but are alike found in all, whether living inland or on the coast; and it would therefore appear that the cause is not attributable to diet, habits, or, indeed, to any external circumstance. 142

3. The opinion expressed on this subject by Dr. Mouat was that "their hue is remarkably black and lustrous;" while Surgeon-Major Hodder[1] describes them as "extremely black, more so than the African negro, and some have a dull leaden hue like that of a black-leaded stove." In this latter remark I fully concur; indeed, the simile strikes me as an exceedingly happy one, and as exactly expressing the predominating colour of their skin.

4. On examining a number of individuals, and comparing the colour of their skin and eyes with the standard tables prepared by the late M. Broca, it was found that the skin of the face and shoulders of the majority corresponded most nearly with No. 42, the variations tending towards 27 and 28, while that of the trunk, in the generality of cases, agreed with No. 27, and in certain others with No. 49. The prevailing hue of the eyes was found to be most closely represented by No. 16, one exception, which had to be classed under No. 1, being found among those tested.

Odour.—1. The ammoniacal, rancid, goat-like exhalations of the negro are not found among them, and the peculiarity of odour which attaches to their persons is chiefly due to the unguent, called *kòi'ob-da*,[2] composed of red oxide of iron mixed with either turtle or pig's fat, with which they delight to paint themselves. When in health, and under ordinary circumstances, their breath is sweet.[3] 302

Anatomy and Physiology (*continued*).—2. Their powers of abstinence from solid food have never, to our knowledge, been severely tested; but it has been noticed that, on rare occasions, when forced to make a long day's journey through the jungles without a halt, they are in the habit of binding a strip of bark or other substance round their waists, to reduce, as much as possible, the inconvenience and pain which are caused by what they consider a long fast. Whether in exercise or repose they 261

[1] *Vide* "Pall Mall Budget," 20th April, 1877.

[2] Substantives, adjectives, and many adverbs have the termination "da," which, as mentioned in my previous paper, I believe to be traceable to the defective or partially obsolete verb, *eda-ke*, to be; it is dropped before prepositions and in construction generally, but is usually heard when the word occurs alone. Hence, when I write a hyphen at the end of an Andamanese word, I shall mean that in its full form it has *da*. [193]

[3] It is, nevertheless, commonly noticed, that after feasting on turtle and certain kinds of fish, they are unpleasant neighbours, their breath and hands being then highly odoriferous.

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cannot apparently abstain from food without inconvenience for more than eight hours at a time.

3. When exerting themselves in any way they perspire freely, which may account for their inordinate thirst. So great, indeed, is their inability to endure any privation in respect to drink, that they seldom leave home on the shortest expedition, whether by land or sea, without providing themselves with one or more bamboo vessels, called *gōb-*, containing a supply of fresh water.

4. Loss of sleep they can bear well only when under the influence of strong excitement, as in turtle hunting, or at festive gatherings, where singing and dancing are kept up for many successive hours;[1] they have even been known to spend forty-eight hours at such times without taking any rest.

5. What little cool weather there is in the latitude of their islands, during December and January, they dislike extremely; in striking evidence of this they are found, as I will elsewhere mention,[2] unconsciously concurring with the great Italian poet in depicting the region of punishment, for the souls of the wicked, as one of intense cold. After this, it will appear somewhat strange to say that, in spite of their aversion to what they consider cold weather—which never registers less than 69° F. on the highest elevation in South Andaman—they are careful, during the hot season, to avoid any lengthened exposure to the direct rays of the sun, and endeavour to lessen the discomfort caused by the heat by smearing their persons with a white-wash of common white clay and water.[3] It has long been erroneously believed that they have recourse to this expedient in order to allay the inconvenience which they would otherwise suffer from the bites of mosquitoes and other jungle pests; but the true reason for the practice is, I am well assured, that which I have above given, for the various insects which might annoy them are, for the most part, kept away by the smoke of the hut fire, beside which a great portion of their time is spent when at rest, or when engaged in any sedentary occupation.

6. The voices of the men are usually clear without being deep, while those of the women, especially when raised, are very shrill.

7. The mucous membrane of the mouth is stained with pigment to a greater degree than was found to be the case with such of the natives of India as were compared with them.

8. The general excellence of the teeth strikes one as remark-

[1] *Vide post* "Games and Amusements," paragraph 32.

[2] *Vide post* "Religious Beliefs, &c.," paragraph 25.

[3] I would here draw attention to the fact, that while the object in smearing themselves with *ōg-* wash is to keep themselves as cool as possible, they often daub their bodies with *kòi'ob-* after sundown for the opposite reason, *i.e.*, for the sake of warmth.

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264 day's hunt, they usually provide themselves with some fire and a *gōb-*[1] of food, which they warm up and enjoy about midday:[2] no difference is made between the sexes, but all fare alike.

261 5. The average amount eaten by an Andamanese adult appears to exceed that of a native of India, and to average three or four pounds daily, while, like many other savages, after a successful hunt, or on some special occasion, when dancing is carried on through the entire night,[3] the consumption of food is surprising, and has, in some instances, been estimated at upwards of ten pounds of pork, or turtle, in the twenty-four hours, helped out by mouthfuls of some one or more of the delicacies above enumerated.[4]

264 6. As may be assumed from foregoing sections, caste distinctions are unknown; while, however, all members of a family take their meals together, a married man is only permitted to eat with other Benedicts and bachelors, but never with any women save those of his own household, unless indeed he be well advanced in years. Bachelors as well as spinsters are required to take their meals apart with those of their respective sexes.

7. Their mode of eating meat is to cram a large piece into the mouth, and then to cut off whatever is in excess[5] with a bamboo or cane (now-a-days generally a steel) knife. The same custom, carried to a more disgusting extreme, is found among
271 the Esquimaux.[6] Speaking generally of the Andamanese it may be said that water is their only beverage, for though the aborigines in the vicinity of Port Blair have acquired a strong liking for rum, &c., they have not been permitted to gratify it; if very thirsty while on a fishing expedition, and all the fresh water supply be exhausted[7] the *àryô·to-* pour water over their

[1] *Vide* Appendix B, item 82.

[2] This applies to the meat of the turtle, pig, iguana, and paradoxurus; the remains of a feast of fish, shell-fish, and prawns are not warmed up a second time; a further distinction is made in the case of turtles' eggs, the three insects mentioned in paragraph 3, edible roots, and such fruits as are cooked (*vide post* paragraph 19), for these are left to cool before they are eaten.

[3] *Vide* "Games and Amusements," paragraphs 21 and 22.

[4] *Bêche de mer* and edible birds'-nests, so highly esteemed by some, and of which large supplies are obtainable along their coasts, are not regarded by the Andamanese as fit for food.

[5] For the following note, which refers to a similar practice among the Napo-Indians of South America, I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Distant:—"In eating meat (usually monkey, sea-cow, and peccari) we observed that they did not tear or bite it, but, putting one end of a long piece in the mouth, cut off what they could not get in, as Darwin noticed among the Fuegians" (Jas. Orton: "Andes and the Amazon," p. 168).

[6] *Vide* Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," p. 486.

[7] They will now-a-days occasionally assuage their thirst, when away from home, by cutting off a piece of ground rattan (*bôl-*); this practice is only known to the people of South Andaman, and has been borrowed from the Burmese convicts.

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

262 123 [975] [825] 513 123 and therefore dangerous to offend by cooking them. Luckily they accepted fish of almost every description, and vegetables. To convince them of our good intentions concerning their food, at Port Blair an Onge observer was stationed permanently near the kitchen to watch the preparation of meals. Nevertheless, within a few days all 30 Onge fell ill as a consequence of the different food and climate. In their island they sleep, completely naked and uncovered, lying directly on beds made of rough branches. Their only precaution, as I mentioned before, is to keep a fire permanently burning close to the bed. This was not feasible in the rooms with wooden floors that were provided for them in Port Blair, and blankets did not avail. So the 30 Onge developed a fever and we were obliged to take them urgently back to Little Andaman, where they promptly recovered. The incident gave me a further opportunity to observe the curative methods of the Onge.

262 114 With regard to their care to avoid illness from food, I must point out the fact that misleading information has been published on the subject even in reputed papers on the Andamans. I will discuss them in my Onge book, but I wish here to briefly stress a few points: the Onge, and the present residual coastal or forest Andamanese, refuse to eat – besides birds and fish such as shark, ray, eel or muraenae – some other animals such as paradoxurus, bats, rats, varanus and snakes. The contrary is affirmed in those papers. To quote the well-known book by A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN ("The Andaman Islanders", pp. 37, 91 and 389), all Andaman Islanders, including the Onge, consider the above-mentioned species edible. Varanus is supposed to be acceptable for its [832] lustful habits that make of it an aphrodisiac. My direct and protracted experience both in Little and in Great Andaman compels me to state that such information is false. It is true, however, that the Andaman Islanders believe 261 252 [231] 266 262 they acquire some of the properties of their devoured victims. This occurs only if the animals are cut up alive. Therefore turtles, pigs and dugongs are cruelly sectioned while still alive, and the Onge also believe that their health and energy profit by it. Cannibalism may be founded on such beliefs, but it is completely unknown to Andaman Islanders of all times and places. Young sucking-pigs are avoided, as food, by men, and even withheld from the dogs; but the Onge are partial to other things which, in our opinion, are far worse: crickets, and the fat larvae of coleoptera that collect in tree trunks.

Without giving here a full list of the foods that are considered harmful or curative, I shall add just a few remarks on the subject. The healthiest, as well as the tastiest part of the pig is supposed to be the kidney and its surrounding fat. It is offered to old or distinguished people, as a sign of favour. As I [888] 123 553 helped the Onge, as much as possible, with gifts of tools and medicines, they found it complimentary to name me after their favorite titbit, intending thereby to honour me as a friend and healer. By such a name I came to be known in Little Andaman, and this made my work easier. In the Onge language the word for kidney fat is *cue-changhēghē*; I was delighted with it, for it proclaimed the high esteem I was held in by my Onge friends.

262 751 [825] Foods considered healthy by the Onge include honey, yams, several succulent roots and the fat of turtle and dugong. Pteropus, a giant bat very

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Onges

The Onges do not seem to require any preventive measures, and seem naturally immune to malaria. They do, however, transmit the disease to strangers, through the mosquitoes which are everywhere in Little Andaman. Like many other inhabitants of tropical areas, they probably all carry the disease without being affected by it – neither children nor adults show any sign of splenic enlargement.

In contrast to their periodic gorging, the Onges will equally cheerfully endure hunger, thirst and exhaustion. During our hazardous canoe trip to South Brother, however, they appeared much more affected than I was by long exposure to the sun. We were completely without any means of shelter for an entire afternoon in the open sea, and though the Onges tried to cover their heads as best they could, they still developed severe (and genuine) headaches, and were clearly much happier in the dark forest, which must be considered their natural environment.

Nothing has hitherto been known of the intelligence level and general psychology of the Onges. The childishness of their behaviour, however, is curiously in keeping with their strikingly child-like appearance. Like children, they seek only the satisfaction of elementary stimuli, and like children they pass in a flash from one mood to another, so that they are a people of sudden contrasts.

One example is their passionate love for their dogs, in marked contrast to the intense cruelty with which they hunt their prey. Having once realized the usefulness of dogs, first imported into the islands some thirty years ago, the Onges now pet them like little girls with their dolls, and the Onge women will suckle the family puppies quite naturally with their own children. Yet once a dog dies the other side of the Onge nature comes to the fore and the carcase is thrown into the forest – there is no looking back.

Their minds are in a sense inventive, in that they have evolved devices to help them acquire their food, but they have never, for example, thought of the fish-hook, despite the abundance of iron pieces thrown up by shipwrecks all round the islands. Anything new is taken up with a child's momentary enthusiasm, but they have no notion of sustained mental effort such as any form of counting.

Like children, too, the Onges laugh at the slightest thing, although their mirth is always restrained. In this they differ from the African peoples, particularly the Bushmen, who are often by

gashes with their tusks, unaware of the spear thrower coming up from behind. The result is inevitable. The dangerous boars are killed outright, but whenever possible the pig is, like the turtles, trussed helplessly and vivisected, again strictly according to established ritual, and again with an unconscious cruelty that is to Western eyes unbelievable. The liver, lungs, heart and intestines are the dogs' reward, and in a matter of minutes they are gone and the last drop of blood licked up.

Before every hunt the dogs are left hungry, on the principle that a well-fed dog does not hunt. If a young or small pig is caught by the pack during the hunt the Onges at once drag the body away and lodge it in the fork of a bush or tree. I have also seen this done if a full-grown pig is caught which is too thin, or unhealthy, or if a sow is taken, as the Onges find the females less tasty. In the dry season, when food is scarce and the pigs are less aggressive, they can be caught by one dog alone.

In the rainy season pork is, to the Onge palate, at its best. The pigs are fat and tasty, gorging on the lush vegetation that follows the onset of the south-west monsoon till they become slow, and easy prey. The dogs follow their tracks easily on the sodden ground, and the usual orgy of slaughter follows day after day, the Onges caring little for tomorrow and nothing for the day after. It is only owing to the fall in the numbers of the human population that the pig is still extant on the island; in compensation for the continuous slaughter I saw whole areas of forest round deserted communal huts where the earth had been literally ploughed up by the snouts of innumerable pigs rooting undisturbed for tubers.

During the hunt a number of dogs inevitably lose themselves in the maze of vegetation, and are cut off from the pack. Usually they manage to find their way back to one of the camps. When I went on long journeys into the forest we were always followed by strays. Greeting each other as though they were old friends they would quickly join the pack we used to take with us to hunt for the party. A stray will always try to find its own master, and any that are left behind during the hunt howl desperately like jackals. Others join in, in an eerie chorus, pausing every now and again as though waiting for their master's reply. Their howling is a curious reversion to the wild state – all the canines fear solitude, wherever

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thought they were weeds and pulled them up. I never managed to see the plant in flower in the wild state, as this occurs at the height of the rainy season, and as no final definition is possible in the absence of the flower it remains unidentified.

The Onges take full advantage of the plant's properties as a bee-deterrent and in mid-March they eat honey, paint themselves, and dance, twenty-four hours a day. During these orgies I have seen a group of about sixty Onges demolish in a few days ten pigs and a dozen large, wooden vessels full of honey, with basket after basket of fish, caught every night by the women, who were apparently not in the least tired by the long daily treks into the forest after the honey. I can never look back on the Onges without a feeling of profound respect for their powers of digestion!

Yet another source of food for the islanders is the cicada. On Little Andaman there are a few species a little larger than the European variety and others rather smaller. The Onges collect the pupae as they emerge from the ground, usually in the mornings, and roast them as a great treat. They are actually very clean insects, which develop slowly under the earth over a period of years sucking lymph from the roots of the trees. When they emerge from the ground the pupae become leathery, but this presents no problem to the indomitable teeth of the Onges. Inside the cicada chrysalids are a mass of delicate tissues, so white and clean that one can understand the Onges' predilection for them.

On Little Andaman the cicadas chirp intermittently, with long silences; most of the day one hears nothing of them and when they suddenly start up the Onges fall absolutely quiet, terrified of frightening them away and losing their chrysalids.[1] In a few moments the whole forest suddenly echoes with a chorus of cicadas, as they all start up as one and then, a minute later, fall silent. Their intermittent chirping is not confined to the Andamans; it is a feature of several species throughout southern Asia. At Golpahar when I was in the middle of the forest excavating kitchen-middens I heard cicadas start up every day at 6.30 p.m., and then stop until the following day. In the mountains of South India, on the slopes

[1] The Onges do not seem to share the superstitions reported by Man and Brown among the Arioto, who appear to believe in fantastic connections between cicadas, the sun, and storms.

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the hole is enlarged downwards, still the same width, for thirty centimetres or so, to end in an oval cavity large enough to take the incubating female. In both cases all the tapping is done while the bird clings on to the trunk with its claws, which have reversible digits; it is balanced by the tail with its hard, bristle-tipped feathers.

The musical drumming during the mating season is rhythmic, and less violent. The bird selects a hollow trunk and will return to the same one for months. The beak strikes at the rate of about seven to ten blows per second and always in one place, so that no bark is chipped out. The sound diminishes in intensity from the first blow to the last, unlike the food- or nest-drumming. Like the cicada the bird uses its own body as a sound box to aid reverberation, filling itself with as much air as possible. As part of the flight mechanism, all birds have air cavities connected to their lungs and in the woodpecker the system is extremely well developed. These cavities help to increase the vibrations made by drumming on the wood. The head is held at the right angle to obtain the best reverberation (not the best angle for chipping out bark, as when the bird is looking for food), and the bird itself vibrates with the wood, absorbing the short sound-waves and increasing the resonance.

Although to the naturalist there is enough in the wild life of the Andamans for endless studies of everything from cuckoos to parrots, sea snakes, shells with their beautiful spiral patterns – and the wealth of material almost overwhelms one – it must be admitted that the Onges see all the beauty around them mainly in terms of food.

They will search for hours for the nests of the salangana or *Collocalia esculenta*, the swallow which builds well-known edible nests so greatly prized in many parts of the world. The bird secretes a gummy saliva, which hardens when exposed to the air, and it is of this that it builds its nest in caves near the sea, ejecting saliva on to the roof of the caves. The substance acts in Man as an aphrodisiac, which may account for the value placed upon swallows' nests in China. The nests are found usually in the darkest parts of the caves, hanging from the roof, sometimes seven or eight in a bunch. It is not known why these swallows like to nest in the dark, or how they manage to find their own eggs and young when they return to the cave after foraging, or are driven away from the nest by intruders such as snakes. It seems on the face of it impossible for snakes to